



August 2011

# Natural Family Planning

## What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a way to help a woman know when sexual intercourse can result in pregnancy.

## How does Natural Family Planning Work?

During each menstrual cycle, one of a woman's pair of ovaries releases an egg. This process is called ovulation. A woman is most likely to become pregnant if sexual intercourse takes place just before or just after ovulation. A number of changes occur in a woman's body during the menstrual cycle. By keeping track of these changes, a woman can identify her fertile days and plan when to have intercourse.

There are three ways in which a woman can keep track of her fertile days.

### 1. Basal Body Temperature Method

This method involves taking your temperature every day, and writing it down on a calendar. As you get into the habit of taking your temperature each day, you will notice a pattern develop over time. On the day of ovulation, your temperature rises between 0.4°F and 0.8° F, and stays 0.5° F higher for 2 days.

### 2. Cervical Mucous Method

This method relies on charting vaginal mucous secretions. You can predict ovulation and fertile days by monitoring cervical mucous. Around the time of ovulation the mucous becomes slippery, elastic and clear. After ovulation, the cervical mucous changes; it is no longer stretchy, but is dry, yellow and pasty.

### 3. Calendar Method

This method involves charting your menstrual cycle on a calendar for several months. To predict ovulation, you take the shortest cycle minus 19 days (example 26-19= 7), the longest cycle minus 10 days (example 32-10=22). This calculation between the 7th to 22nd days of the cycle provides a time period where couples need to abstain or use barrier methods.

**Note:** It is not recommended to rely on the calendar method alone, but to combine it with the temperature and mucous methods. Combining all three methods is called the Symptothermal Method.;

## How effective is NFP in preventing pregnancy?

With typical use, out of 100 women who use this method during one year, 20 women may get pregnant. Problems may arise through lack of knowledge or a disturbance in the regular menstrual pattern brought on by illness or stress.

For further information, please call:  
**York Region Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**  
**TTY 1-866-252-9933 or visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)**

## What are the advantages of NFP?

- does not involve medications
- is low-cost
- helps you to understand your body
- can improve a couple's relationship
- is approved by some religious groups

## Who might find these methods difficult?

- women who are breastfeeding, have irregular periods or are approaching menopause
- spontaneous couples
- people with developmental disabilities

NFP requires dedication, education and practice. This fact sheet does not cover all the detailed knowledge and skills required to rely on these methods successfully. It is important to take classes and read about these methods. Family planning centres, Planned Parenthood and Serena organizations can direct you to professional instructors or successful users.

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